

Journalism career eventually led Sorensen to study law

By Travis Gulbrandson
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Although Tom Sorensen now serves as associate dean and director of externships of the University of South Dakota School of Law, he originally was a music major.

However, it was not a major he completed.

"I was interrupted by some issues in life, including the military," Sorensen said. "So, I needed to make some choices. I was away from college for a long time, but I was still learning. I think we learn every day, no matter what we're doing."

During his "time away," Sorensen became a journalist, working primarily in the field of radio. He began as an announcer at the local Vermillion station.

"We didn't do a heck of a lot of local news, and it bothered me that we didn't," he said. "As a kid from Vermillion, I thought, 'Geez, there's all kinds of stuff going on.'"

Eventually he began work at other radio stations, which culminated in a 10-year news directorship at KSOO in Sioux Falls.

Over the years he also served as president of the Sioux Falls Area Press Association and the Associated Press Broadcasters.

Sorensen said he does miss working as a journalist.

"I'm very critical of the media now," he said. "The people who were my colleagues back then, we considered journalism a public service. It was more about, 'How do you get ratings?' You can have a lot of gimmicks ... or you can be reliable every single day and provide people with what they need to know to make decisions in their lives. That will get you ratings, and we proved that time and time

Spotlight On

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH DAKOTA

again at KSOO."

After he left KSOO, Sorensen worked with a number of organizations, including the Associated Press, before he made the decision to attend law school.

It was journalism that began his career in law, he said.

"I covered a lot of trials, various kinds of trials - some civil, but mostly criminal, and a lot of them pretty high-level stuff," he said. "All along my work in the news and journalism ... had to do with law. So, the opportunity arose, and I decided it was a big decision at my age - 45 - to apply, and I fortunately got in to the USD School of Law."

Sorensen, his wife Mary and their three daughters came back to Vermillion, where he worked at a number of jobs before he began law school, the most notable being his tenure as news director and announcer for South Dakota Public Radio.

"I took morning classes, and I took afternoon classes when those ran out. It worked with my schedule in Public Radio," he said.

Graduating in 1999, Sorensen worked with the Bogue, Weeks & Collier law firm on Main Street, as well as in private practice. Soon after, he became assistant dean at the USD School of Law.

Sorensen has served as

associate dean for about nine years, and describes the position as being "like the academic dean."

"I help provide academic support and assist students," he said. "I actually hire an upper-level student to help students, monitoring grad assistants and research assistants and help get them positions here and elsewhere."

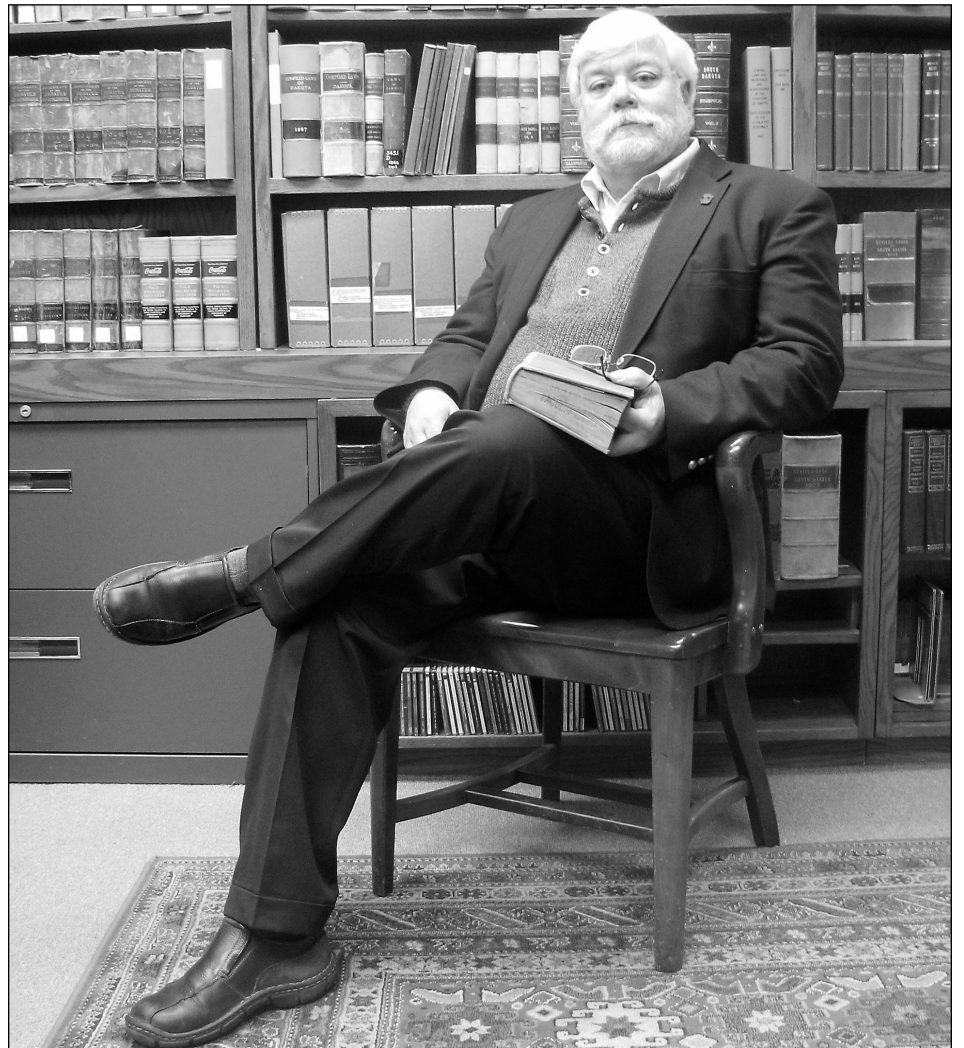
He also serves as director of externships for the law school.

"Our externship is a six-hour summer course where students work in law offices under the rules of student practice in whatever state they're going to work in," he said.

Among his other responsibilities, Sorensen helps to enforce academic rules and student policies, as well as assisting the university by serving on committees and other campus offices.

A background in media is very beneficial to what he does, Sorensen said.

"I like to help publicize what we do," he said. "We have a lot of wonderful public programs that are free that people should come to.



TOM SORENSEN

They're always welcome here at the law school."

Another group that is always welcome is the South Dakota Supreme Court, the chief justice of which visits each incoming class to welcome them to the profession.

"We have a wonderful, wonderful relationship with the lawyers and the judges around here, especially those licensed in South Dakota," Sorensen said. "We have alumni in every state. These people - whether they're a judge or an attorney - they like to come back and help, and we love that. It's great for the students."

Working with those students is Sorensen's favorite

part of the job.

"They're wonderful people, and they're very smart. And they're here to help people," he said. "That's

what law school is for. It's to help people get a license to go out and help people. It's a service profession. It's not a TV show."

161 Acres of Clay County Farm Land (Spirit Mount Township) AT AUCTION Sold in 2-Tracts

Thursday, Feb. 2 - 10:30 a.m.

Sale Site: Corner of 313th Street and Bluff Road. From Vermillion, SD: Highway 50 By-pass & Highway 19 junction- go 1 mile North then 4 miles West on Bluff Road OR From Meckling, SD: 1 mile North on 457th Ave then 4 miles East on 313th Street.

Tract I: FSA Office shows 108.12 acres tillable with a corn base of 42.7, and a bean base of 63.6. Also included on this Tract are (2) 18x16 steel bins. This is a nice flat tract of land with a 0 to 2% slope.

Tract I Legal: The SE1/4 Sec 21-93-52, except F&M Rayman Tract I, Clay County, SD. The acreage & pasture are not part of Tract I. 124.27 +/- surveyed acres.

Tract II: Tract II is located 1/8 mile east of 313th Street & Bluff Road. FSA Office shows all tillable with a corn base of 15.3 and a bean base of 22.9. This is a nice tract of land with a 0 to 6% slope.

Tract II Legal: The W1/2, SW1/4 except F&M Rayman Tracts 2 & 3, Sec 22-93-52, Clay County, SD. Approximately 37 acres all tillable, correct acres will be determined by survey.

TERMS: 10% non refundable down payment due day of auction with the balance due on closing day of March 2, 2012.

Possession on closing. Taxes for 2011 due in 2012 will be paid by the seller. Title Insurance and closing costs will be split 50/50 between buyer & seller. Clay County Abstract & Title Co is the closing agent. Auctioneers are acting as agents for the sellers in this transaction. This farm is free & clear to farm or rent for 2012.

Peggy Nelsen, Nancy Gruenhagen, Penny Valentine - Owners

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